

Why drugs are wrong

The misuse of drugs, legal or illegal, affects not only the user but those around them. It is essential that one looks at more than physical harm - and takes into account the consequences for other people; it is not 'a victimless crime'.

Take, as a starting point, the WHO definition of 'Health' which encompasses Physical, Mental, Intellectual, Social, Emotional, Spiritual and Environmental; then see how each of these components of total health is affected by drug misuse....

Social - The loss of a sense of commitment or responsibility, and the drift out of education or employment; perhaps into petty crime, is part of the life story of too many drug users.

Mental - The use of powerful psychoactive drugs, particularly marijuana which is fat-soluble, can affect cerebral blood flow and cause damage to the brain. Psychoses are not unknown and clinical depression often results. There is currently concern that the use of Ecstasy may result in long term depression or a type of Alzheimers when users reach old age. Other drugs impact mental health.

Intellectual Damage - from heavy use of alcohol is widely known; current research indicates cannabis has serious effects on memory - and also impacts ability to think, learn and decide; vital to students.

Emotional - The breakdown of family and other relationships, anger, guilt, conflict and stress are much more common in users and in their families.

Spiritual - Drug rehabilitation clinics often find that problem drug users have lost any sense of spirituality; in seeking for something to fill an inner void they turn to drugs as the answer.

Environmental - We are part of an ecosystem; we can either be 'takers' or 'givers' - drug users set themselves apart from the non-using majority and are chemically influenced to 'look after No.1' first.

Physical - This is by far the most documented area; more and more research is showing the possible harm from the use of drugs - including tobacco, alcohol and cannabis. Fresh evidence is being collected and it is quite clear that the more we learn about drugs the more we realize their

damaging impact on the body.

Definitions (within this context)

Drug - Any substance misused for psychoactive purposes.

Drug Misuse - The use of any illegal drug and the inappropriate use of any legal drug.

Appropriate - As defined by age circumstances or purpose of use.

Weasel Words

The euphemistic terms often used to cloud the drugs issue.

Experimental use - There is nothing scientific or controlled about drug misuse.

Recreational use - This word means something healthy; misusing drugs isn't.

Soft drugs - The scientific body now rejects this misleading term.

Informed choice - When it comes to an illegal act, choice is not appropriate anymore than it is for theft or violence. Moreover, who is doing the informing? This needs close scrutiny.

Drug education - Should discourage use. Some materials are indifferent or even encourage drug use. Vet them carefully